

GREATER YELLOWSTONE INTERAGENCY BRUCELLOSIS COMMITTEE INFORMATION ACTION PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee

Recognizing the need for a concerted effort to manage brucellosis in the GYA, the governor of Wyoming appointed a task force in 1990 made up of cattlemen, sportsmen, and representatives from affected state agencies. The task force recognized that eradication of brucellosis in the GYA was desirable and that it would require the cooperation of all state and federal agencies involved in brucellosis control and wildlife management in the three states. Consequently, their final report recommended that the governors of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho establish an interagency brucellosis task force that would take the lead in establishing a consensus that assures that the problem will be solved.

In 1993, representatives appointed by the governors of the three states developed a mission statement, goal, and objectives that would fulfill the needs of the state agencies relative to brucellosis in wildlife in the GYA. The state representatives also recognized that federal agencies had to participate if the problem was to be solved because much of the brucellosis problem involves animals and habitat under federal control. The federal agencies that have jurisdictional authority over wild animals or lands in the GYA [National Park Service (NPS), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Forest Service (FS)], and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) which has jurisdiction authority over domestic animals, were invited by the three governors to participate with state animal health and fish and game representatives of the three states in January 1994 in Bozeman, Montana, to address the issue of brucellosis in the GYA. All affected agencies sent representatives, and there was agreement that a committee called the Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee (GYIBC) should be formed. The draft goal, mission, and objectives previously agreed upon by state representatives were modified slightly and used as the cornerstone (Appendix I) for a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be signed by the governors of the three states and secretaries of the departments of Agriculture and Interior. The first major accomplishment of the GYIBC was to sponsor a symposium on brucellosis in the GYA, co-hosted by the three governors. The symposium, held in Jackson, Wyoming in September 1994, was successful in bringing all the issues to the forefront and allowing all major interests to participate. The first semi-official meeting of the GYIBC was held immediately after the symposium and subsequent meetings were held on an approximate quarterly basis. The MOU was signed in July 1995.

The GYIBC organizational structure presently consists of an Executive Committee and three subcommittees - the Technical Subcommittee, the Information and Education Subcommittee, and the Research Subcommittee. Through its Executive Committee, the agreed upon scope of work for the GYIBC is to develop options and recommendations for the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture, governors, and regional administrators and directors of member agencies in chartering a management program for brucellosis-affected wildlife populations and their habitat in the GYA; provide coordination of agency responsibilities without usurping agency mandates; encourage cooperation in resolving resource problems and conflicting interests related to brucellosis in wildlife; and provide guidance and oversight to subcommittees.

Information and Education Subcommittee

The Information and Education Subcommittee serves at the pleasure of the Executive Committee. The charter of this group as assigned by the Executive Committee is:

1. Develop factual information concerning the purpose of the GYIBC for approval

and distribution by the Executive Committee.

2. Develop a brucellosis information and education strategic plan for the Executive Committee. The strategic plan will recommend specific member agency information and education responsibilities, time frames, and objectives. This agreement will not preclude individual news releases by any member agency of the GYIBC on its positions or comments about brucellosis, as they relate to the specific member agency's mission, authority, and mandates.

II. PROCESS USED IN DEVELOPING THE ACTION PLAN

At their February 1996 joint meeting, the Information and Education and Technical subcommittees each named representatives to a smaller working group with responsibility to write the first draft of a proposed GYIBC Information Action Plan. That working group met in Moose, Wyoming on March 12, 1996, and developed a draft action plan, which was subsequently sent out for review to subcommittee members. The subcommittees formally reviewed that draft document at their September meeting. In January 1997, the draft plan was transmitted to the Executive Committee for their review. Subsequent to their input, additional modifications were made. In May 1997, the Executive Committee formally adopted the plan at their meeting in Jackson, Wyoming.

In initiating this plan, the GYIBC recognizes the action plan has had no public input. Consequently, public input will be sought through the NEPA process or, if necessary, by other means. Such public input will be incorporated into future revisions of the Action Plan. The plan will be periodically updated based on identified public needs and progress on the issue.

III. COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION, CONCERNS, AND ISSUES

One of the continuing efforts of the Information and Education Subcommittee is to identify and clearly articulate public concerns and issues regarding brucellosis. The actions necessary to address these concerns form the basis of the GYIBC Information Action Plan.

Issues and Concerns

From previous plans, studies, and public input, the following have been identified as issues related to brucellosis.

- Bison movements and numbers
- Bison on public land where cattle are not present
- Self-sustaining, genetically-diverse bison and elk populations
- Impacts of management actions on bison and elk population dynamics and behavior
- Management and handling of bison and elk in a humane manner
- Killing of bison or elk because of brucellosis
- Recreational hunting and viewing of bison and elk outside YNP
- Opportunities for Native American tribes, other organizations, and the general public to obtain live bison to establish other free-ranging herds or to obtain bison carcasses
- No clear definition of the problem
- Incidence of undulant fever
- Additional lands for bison and elk habitat
- Public land grazing to accommodate bison and avoid risk to cattle
- Plowing and grooming roads in YNP to limit bison movements and restore more natural conditions
- Ecosystem-wide disease management program based on herd unit action plans
- Realistic management costs
- Native American cultural relationships with bison
- Effectiveness of vaccinations in cattle, bison, and elk

- Brucellosis-free status of states and affected livestock industries
- Cost: benefit ratio of eradicating brucellosis
- Transmission potential from wildlife to cattle in clinical trials
- Transmission potential from wildlife to cattle in field
- Risk analysis
- Infection rates in wildlife herds
- Impact of brucellosis on cattle herds in the GYA
- Impact of brucellosis in the GYA on national and international cattle markets
- Continued visibility and a clear public understanding of the goal, mission and objectives of the GYIBC
- Need for public involvement in policy formulation and issue resolution regarding brucellosis
- Information sharing between member agencies of the GYIBC

This extensive, but incomplete list of issues provides insight into the kinds of outreach efforts that will be necessary if the GYIBC hopes to accomplish its mission. The following statements provide the framework for guiding the Action Plan:

1. The GYIBC needs continued visibility before the general public and a clear public understanding of the goal, mission, and objectives of the GYIBC.
2. Respective agencies, which comprise the GYIBC, need to maintain close coordination with each other, land users, Congressional delegations, universities, and others.
3. There is a continuing need for greater public involvement in policy formulation and issue identification and resolution regarding brucellosis in the GYA.
4. Information and education efforts need to address the positive accomplishments and the benefits of elimination of brucellosis, as well as any negative consequences.
5. There is a continuing need to work closely with local publics.
6. Information/education efforts need to target all groups involved or affected by brucellosis in the GYA.

III. TARGET AUDIENCES

The following listing includes the major audiences targeted in the Information Action Plan:

- GYIBC member agencies
 - Personnel directly involved
 - Personnel peripherally involved
- Livestock, bison and cervid producers
 - Within the GYA
 - Within the three affected states
 - National
- Animal health regulatory agencies and officials
 - Federal
 - State
- Wildlife conservation organizations
- Native Americans
- Livestock producer and health organizations
- Animal welfare organizations
- GYA user groups and interested publics
 - Hunters
 - Outfitters
 - Wildlife watchers
 - Wildlife enthusiasts
 - Winter recreationists
 - Gateway communities and businesses
- Elected officials

- Local
- State
- National
- Educators of all types
- Media

IV. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Following are two goals of the GYIBC Information Action Plan:

- A. Increase public understanding regarding the issues surrounding brucellosis in the GYA and the leadership role of GYIBC in cooperative resolution of these issues, by gathering and communicating factual and consistent information.
- B. Increase member agency understanding of public concerns about brucellosis in the GYA.

In stating these goals, the Information and Education Subcommittee recognizes the ambitious, perhaps even over ambitious, nature of this undertaking. It is therefore assumed, that all of these objectives will not be ongoing concurrently and periodic review or evaluation may be necessary to determine the need and practicality of the identified tasks.

GOAL A: Increase public understanding regarding the issues surrounding brucellosis in the GYA and the leadership role of GYIBC in cooperative resolution of these issues, by gathering and communicating factual and consistent information

Objective 1: Produce and publish a semi-annual newsletter.

Objective 2: Continue to set aside at each GYIBC Executive Committee meeting a forum that allows for direct local, organizational, legislative/congressional input.

Objective 3: Maintain and update a mailing list which member GYIBC agencies can use cooperatively when disseminating information to the public and media on matters relating to brucellosis.

Objective 4: Develop a public participation and feedback mechanism to improve brucellosis management and information and education efforts.

Objective 5: Prepare an information packet for agency field personnel to hand out to landowners and agency personnel.

Objective 6: Submit periodic news releases about developing issues, technological advances, experimental results, GYIBC achievements, new methods being tested, etc., under the GYIBC logo.

Objective 7: Develop and maintain an Internet/World Wide Web GYIBC page for the purpose of providing current information on GYIBC activities and current brucellosis-related events.

Objective 8: Encourage discussion of brucellosis as a zoonotic disease in regional Hunter Education Programs.

Objective 9: Review and identify all information and data voids (i.e. Appendix II) needed for region-wide efforts which relate to brucellosis. Review with collaborative team of specialists and recommend preparation of appropriate informational materials.

Objective 10: Develop a speakers bureau and prepared presentations on GYA brucellosis issues for use by GYIBC member agencies.

Objective 11: Assess and use existing and alternative avenues (i.e. Park newsletter, science school curricula, etc.) to communicate factual and current information regarding brucellosis in the GYA.

Objective 12: Develop and/or promote feature articles for specific audiences about the GYIBC and brucellosis related issues, as needed.

Objective 13: Develop a "flyer" about the GYIBC which can be included in agency correspondence about the brucellosis issue.

Objective 14: Facilitate, as appropriate, press conferences and/or interviews with GYIBC Executive Committee members or involved politicians. These could be in conjunction with scheduled Executive Committee meetings or at other times when appropriate news develops.

Objective 15: Develop a biographical summary about GYIBC Executive Committee members for distribution to the media and public and include in information packets and flyers, where appropriate.

Objective 16: Utilize the human resources of GYIBC to provide experience and expertise to member agencies in the preparation and/or review of outreach materials.

Objective 17: Assist the Executive Committee in conducting business meetings in a highly professional manner following Robert's Rules of Order or other appropriate professional format. Provide background material and assist with logistics of meetings.

Objective 18: Coordinate brucellosis education efforts with member agencies and other federal, state and animal health organizations in order to keep other adjacent state wildlife and agricultural entities informed of GYIBC efforts.

GOAL B: Increase member agency understanding of public concerns about brucellosis in the GYA.

Objective 1: Create and maintain a file for printed materials pertaining to brucellosis in the GYA. Select materials emanating from regional publications will be distributed monthly to all GYIBC member agencies and interested parties. GYIBC members will forward copies of brucellosis articles to the I&E Subcommittee chairperson for inclusion in the monthly packet.

Objective 2: Pursue development of still photo and video library. I&E Subcommittee members will canvas their agencies for existing materials, review with collaborative team of specialists, and modify as needed.

Objective 3: Continue to improve internal communication effectiveness by developing and implementing procedures and utilizing tools such as Fax, conference calls, information flyer, reviewing minutes of other subcommittees, etc.

Objective 4: Encourage the I&E Subcommittee members to attend Technical Subcommittee and Executive Committee meetings to improve inter-committee communications and enhance understanding of issues.

Objective 5: Encourage GYIBC member agencies to appoint and support their agency's representation in I&E Subcommittee meetings.

Objective 6: Develop a budget so that GYIBC member agencies can fund activities proposed in this Action Plan.

Objective 7: Prepare a concise statement that is agreed upon by all GYIBC member agencies which clearly articulates to all interested parties the problem surrounding the presence of brucellosis in the GYA.

Objective 8: Provide speakers and/or panels to discuss and provide factual information regarding issues surrounding brucellosis in the GYA for GYIBC member agency meetings in order that agency personnel may be well informed.

Whenever GYIBC initiates brucellosis management plans which are subject to the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Information Action Plan may be expanded to include a third goal (Goal C) which could become the public involvement program for the selected planning process. That goal could read:

GOAL C: Increase public understanding and participation in the NEPA process as it pertains to brucellosis in the GYA.

Possible objectives for this goal could include, but not be limited to:

Objective 1: Produce and distribute GYIBC posters and brochures. Revise and reprint as needed. Each agency will maintain an adequate supply of these materials for distribution to targeted publics. Need to do internal communication to let our own people know what is available and how to obtain it.

Objective 2: Develop and distribute standard press packet suitable for use by GYIBC members and I&E Subcommittee members to distribute to media as needed.

Objective 3: Assist with maintaining and updating NEPA process mailing list.

Objective 4: Assist in conducting the public involvement portion of the NEPA process. Provide pertinent feedback as appropriate to the GYIBC.

Objective 5: Provide public forums in major communities of the GYA. Target local groups, outfitters, stockgrowers, conservation organizations, and educators.

APPENDIX I: GOAL, MISSION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE GYIBC

1. "It is the Goal of the GYIBC to protect and sustain the existing free-ranging elk and bison populations in the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) and protect the public interests and economic viability of the livestock industry in the States of Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana.
2. Toward this goal it is the Mission of the GYIBC to facilitate the development and implementation of brucellosis management plans for elk and bison, and their habitat, in the GYA.
3. This mission will be accomplished by subscribing to the following management Objectives, which will in turn, guide the GYIBC:
 - a. Recognize and maintain existing State and Federal jurisdictional authority for elk, bison, and livestock in the GYA;
 - b. Maintain numerically, biologically, and genetically viable elk and bison populations in the respective States, national forests, national parks, and national wildlife refuges in the GYA;
 - c. Maintain the brucellosis free status of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho, thus protecting the ability of producers in the respective States to freely market livestock;
 - d. Eliminate brucellosis related risks to public health from wildlife;
 - e. Eliminate the potential transmission of *Brucella abortus* among elk, bison, and livestock;
 - f. Coordinate brucellosis related management activities among the parties;
 - g. Base brucellosis related management recommendations and decisions on defensible and factual information while encouraging and integrating new advances and technology;
 - h. Aggressively seek public involvement in the decision-making process;
 - i. Communicate to the public factual information about the need to prevent the transmission of brucellosis, the need for its eradication, and the rationale for related agency management actions; and
 - j. Plan for elimination of *Brucella abortus* from the GYA by the year 2010."

APPENDIX II : BRUCELLOSIS DATA NEEDS

Considerable data are available but much of it is in a variety of sources including published scientific literature, agency reports and files, reference libraries, or other public sources. Data that need to be collected or compiled included:

- Land ownership and jurisdiction
- Land management plans and management direction
- Livestock allotments on public land including AUM's, on/off dates, class of livestock
- Livestock numbers, distribution, use dates, and livestock class on private and other jurisdictions
- Efficacy of serologic and microbiologic diagnostic tests on elk, bison, and cattle
- Elk population, distribution, seasonal use areas, and brucellosis exposure rates.
- Bison population, distribution, seasonal use areas, and brucellosis exposure rates
- Data on both elk, bison and cattle regarding infection rates, seropositivity rates, abortion rates; from other areas as well as all available information on local populations
- Current birth and mortality rates from respective elk and bison herds
- Vaccination rates and locations of cattle in GYA
- Evaluation of risk of transmission from elk and bison to livestock (including domestic bison and cervidae) and from elk to bison and vice versa.
- Efficacy of various vaccines and vaccination regimens and delivery systems for cattle, elk, and bison.
- Epidemiology of brucellosis in free-ranging elk and bison
- Pathology and pathogenesis of brucellosis in free-ranging elk and bison

- Recreational use by classes of use in the GYA
- Economics of the GYA by activity such as recreation, livestock production, elk hunting, bison hunting, etc.; any aspect of economics that could be affected by one or more alternatives
- Activities and their efficacy for preventing transmission of brucellosis from wildlife to livestock
- Efficiency, humaneness, and cost of wildlife capture, restraint, and testing techniques
- Feasibility and costs of continued cattle vaccination and surveillance for brucellosis in the GYA
- Economics of the livestock industry so evaluation of various alternatives can be conducted This would include not only economics of local area but also potential consequences of brucellosis transmission from area to other states
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Cost estimates on various quarantine facilities and operations; including likely output of "clean" animals per incoming animals